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ABSTRACT

This booklet profiles 10 schools that have successfully integrated character education into the lives of their students. The Character Education Partnership (CEP), in its "Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education," has articulated the kinds of efforts that its members believe have proven successful in helping young people understand, adopt, and practice core ethical values. These efforts include: character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character; the school must be a caring community; character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation; character education requires moral leadership from both staff and students; and evaluation of character education should assess the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character. The schools presented here are Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School in Franklin, Massachusetts; Brookside Elementary School in Binghamton, New York; Buck Lodge Middle School in Adelphi, Maryland; Easterling Primary School in Marion, South Carolina; Hazelwood Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky; James E. McDade Classical School in Chicago, Illinois; Mound Fort Middle School in Ogden, Utah; Mountain Pointe High School in Phoenix, Arizona; Newsome Park Elementary School in Newport News, Virginia; and Pattonville High School in Maryland Heights, Missouri. Schools were first identified through nominations made by individuals and organizations concerned with character education. Of the 100 schools nominated, about 25 were chosen for intensive study. (RJM)

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ED 427 426

The 1998 Ninth Annual Business Week Awards for Instructional Innovation

Schools of Character

Reclaiming America's Values for Tomorrow's Workforce

Sponsored by Business Week and McGraw-Hill Educational and Professional Publishing Group in collaboration with the Character Education Partnership

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The 1998 Ninth Annual Business Week Awards for Instructional Innovation

Schools of Character

Educating for Today's World and Tomorrow's Workplace

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The 1998 Ninth Annual
Business Week Awards
for Instructional Innovation

Schools of Character

Reclaiming America's Values
for Tomorrow's Workforce

The School of Character

Imagine a school that has...

- promoted caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect in all phases of school life and curriculum
- developed students' commitment to living and acting in accordance with these core ethical values
- involved parents and other adults in building caring communities
- developed adaptable and/or adoptable character education initiatives
- demonstrated positive changes in student behavior and academic performance

Business Week and the ***Educational and Professional Publishing Group,*** both divisions of ***The McGraw-Hill Companies,*** along with ***The Character Education Partnership,*** are pleased to announce ***The 1998 Ninth Annual Business Week Awards for Instructional Innovation.*** These awards spotlight public schools across the country that, with help from parents, community, and business people, have successfully integrated character education into the lives of their students.

Schools of Character foster in students a commitment to living and acting in accordance with core ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect. They do so by developing successful and sustained character education initiatives; connecting students with teachers, school staff, parents, and other adults in an atmosphere of caring community; and, not least, demonstrating that core ethical values can be the basis for improved academic performance and student behaviors. The ultimate objective of all of these endeavors, of course, is to enable today's students to lead productive, generous lives as tomorrow's adults.

This publication provides brief profiles of character education initiatives in a variety of school settings — rural, suburban, and urban; elementary, middle, and high school; small, medium-sized, and large. Some schools have student populations of tremendous diversity; others represent smaller, less heterogeneous communities. The purpose of this project has been to provide educators with an array of models that exemplify effective character education.

What, then, makes for effective character education? In its "Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education," the Character Education Partnership (CEP) has articulated the kinds of efforts that its members believe have proven successful in helping young people understand, adopt, and practice core ethical values:

1. Character education promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character.
2. "Character" must be comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.
3. Effective character education requires an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that promotes the core values in all phases of school life.
4. The school must be a caring community.
5. To develop character, students need opportunities for moral action.
6. Effective character education includes a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them succeed.
7. Character education should strive to develop students' intrinsic motivation.
8. The school staff must become a learning and moral community in which all share responsibility for character education and attempt to adhere to the same core values that guide the education of students.
9. Character education requires moral leadership from both staff and students.
10. The school must recruit parents and community members as full partners in the character-building effort.
11. Evaluation of character education should assess the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators, and the extent to which students manifest good character.

Each of the award-winning schools profiled here possess features that in various ways reflect these Eleven Principles.

How were the winning schools selected? Under a grant from the John Templeton Foundation, CEP invited about 100 individuals and organizations concerned with character education to nominate schools they believed deserved recognition. Nearly 100 schools were nominated; about a quarter of these were selected for intensive study and interviewing by the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University. After much deliberation, the 10 schools profiled here were chosen as the award recipients. An additional eight schools were designated worthy of honorable mention; these excellent schools are listed on the last page of this publication.

A portion of the revenues generated by Business Week's October 27, 1997, corporate-sponsorship special section, *Character Education: Reclaiming America's Values for Tomorrow's Workforce*, has been used to reward six elementary, two middle, and two high schools. Each award consists of a two-part $2,000 grant. The first $1,000 is an honorarium to the school for innovation and dedication. The remaining $1,000 is for the expenses these schools will incur when they share their winning programs with other educators, thereby expanding the "Network to Success." Winners will describe their programs at workshops and conferences throughout the United States and have received national recognition in the May 3, 1998, issue of *Business Week*. This publication will be made available to thousands of educators interested in using these effective strategies.

Please feel free to call these schools, or fax or e-mail your request for information. They are eager to help you.

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Contents

The national winners of The 1998 Ninth Annual Business Week Awards for Instructional Innovation

Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School 2
Franklin, Massachusetts
James M. Bower, Principal
Frank W. Haydu, Commissioner of Education (Interim)

Brookside Elementary School 4
Binghamton, New York
Lynn Lisy-Macan, Principal
John P. Paske, Superintendent

Buck Lodge Middle School 6
Adelphi, Maryland
Dr. Constance Gibb, Principal
Dr. Jerome Clark, Superintendent

Easterling Primary School 8
Marion, South Carolina
Zandra Cook, Principal
Charles Bethea, Superintendent

Hazelwood Elementary School 10
Louisville, Kentucky
Brenda W. Logan, Principal
Dr. Stephen Daeschner, Superintendent

James E. McDade Classical School 12
Chicago, Illinois
Dr. Eleanor L. Addison, Principal
Paul G. Vallas, Superintendent

Mound Fort Middle School 14
Ogden, Utah
Timothy Smith, Principal
Michael F. Paskewicz, Superintendent

Mountain Pointe High School 16
Phoenix, Arizona
Dr. Harold Slemmer, Principal
Dr. James Buchanan, Superintendent

Newsome Park Elementary School 18
Newport News, Virginia
Peter D. Bender, Principal
Dr. Wayne D. Lett, Superintendent

Pattonville High School 20
Maryland Heights, Missouri
Dr. Gretchen J. Fleming, Principal
Dr. Hugh Kinney, Superintendent

Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School

suburban • elementary (K-6) • enrollment: 254

The Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School was founded by a group of parents and educators who envisioned a richer education for their children. They built their school on four pillars: core curriculum, parental involvement, community service, and character education. The result has been a learning community of remarkable closeness and warmth — and remarkable successes.

In 1994, a group of parents in suburban Franklin, Massachusetts, envisioning a richer, deeper education for their children, came together with educators in the community to discuss the founding of a different kind of elementary school. They had in mind a school that would put character education at the center of a rigorous course of academic study. From their discussions the Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School (BFCCS) was born.

A classical model of curriculum based on E.D. Hirsch's Core Knowledge Sequence was the focus of the parents' vision; it remains at the heart of their efforts. The school's founders believe, like Hirsch, that there exists a body of knowledge that all educated people should share. Also like Hirsch, the founders believe that embedded within this shared knowledge are important lessons about morals, virtue, and civility.

The Four Pillars

The founders of BFCCS built the school on four pillars: core curriculum, parental involvement, community service, and character education. Principal Jim Bower explains the school's mission this way: "to create a moral climate of thoughtfulness, order, and justice."

The school emphasizes one of the cardinal virtues each month: Fortitude, Temperance, Justice, Prudence. The idea was inspired by Benjamin Franklin, the school's namesake, who, describing a project of self-improvement, wrote:

> I made a little book, in which I allotted a page for each of the virtues.... I determined to give a week's strict attention to each of the virtues successively.... And like him who having a garden to weed, does not attempt to eradicate all the bad herbs at once, but works on one of the beds at a time.... I hoped [to see] in my pages the progress I made.

At the end of each month, BFCCS parents receive the next month's curriculum outline — including a character education scope and sequence, which provides:

- The Month's Theme (explained);
- The Weekly Virtues (briefly defined, which support the Month's Theme);
- Family Service Suggestions (ideas for practicing the virtues in family and community life);
- Family Reading Suggestions (titles of works that support the virtues in focus);
- Curriculum Connections (how the theme is being modeled in the classroom through literature and history—supplied separately by each teacher); and
- Student Goals (very specific and attainable goals for improvement, identified and written by the student with parental guidance).

The Character-Curriculum Connection

Recently, for example, the monthly theme was Fortitude, with the supporting virtues of perseverance and courage. Here is how four classrooms at BFCCS derived character education from the Core Knowledge Curriculum:

- The first graders, during a unit on "Colonies to Independence," studied Benjamin Franklin as an example of perseverance with his "try, try again" attitude.
- The second graders, meanwhile, studied immigration. A parent reports that her daughter spent an evening telling her about the hardships immigrants to Ellis Island endured: "I was impressed by how fluently she talked about the great courage of these immigrants."
- At the same time, during a unit on early African kingdoms, fourth grade students read Sundiata, a Mali tale about a child unable to walk or speak. The reading led to a discussion of the boy's fortitude in overcoming his disabilities.

- Fifth-grade students discussed European explorers and the courage it took to embark on their journeys. When the teacher explained that greed, too, was a driving force, the class pondered the question, "How does motivation affect courage?" The students later put together books combining their research and reflections.

Staff Development, Parent Support

While the breadth and depth of the curriculum demands much of BFCCS's committed faculty ("It's not for the feeble of heart," says Peg Murphy, a BFCCS founder), they are not without assistance. BFCCS places a high priority on staff and parent development. Most faculty members attend the annual Core Knowledge Conference. They also attend monthly character education seminars, not only to deepen their understanding of the virtues, but also to examine ways that the virtues can be integrated with the core curriculum and the school's ethos.

Parents are informed monthly of the character education links made with the curriculum and are given practical suggestions for readings and activities at home that can support the school's character education initiative. In addition, the Parent Resource Corps gives teachers access to the parents' expertise. Every parent receives a curriculum sequence for all grades. Parents indicate what services they can provide — from lending a Japanese sword to teaching a lesson on black holes.

Right Action Modeled and Practiced

The BFCCS also fosters a strong sense of community service in its student body. An essential component of the service program is the cultivation of personal and social responsibility. Examples of some ongoing community service projects include:

- regularly visiting the local senior living center and nursing facility;
- donating time to environmental clean-ups and recycling centers;
- volunteering at the local public library; and
- assisting at the annual toy and clothing drive.

Bower believes that both students and faculty "model and practice" what they see as right action. "Discipline is not a problem, and there have been no suspensions or expulsions since the school opened over two and a half years ago," says Principal Bower. "Teaching within a character framework results in a well ordered, disciplined community full of warmth, as well as high expectations." Charter schools are under close scrutiny. Test scores and state evaluations show that the school is doing remarkably well.

Bower describes BFCCS's responsibility to its students this way: "We have the power to build or preserve ideals among young children and sustain their sense of wonder about the world. Whether it is the beauty of language, the fascination with nature, or the heroism of man, it is for us to sustain a child's belief in the ultimate goodness of the world. If we let that belief slip away from children, what have we left them?"

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Students working on a food drive for community service, an integral component of BFCCS's character education program.

Brookside Elementary School

suburban • elementary (K-6) • enrollment: 510

A brainstorming session convinced Brookside Elementary School's principal that the school needed a better sense of community and should address the matter of character. A list of ten core attributes, a program of creative and innovative activities, and strong leadership have brought the school together.

In the spring of 1995, Lynn Lisy-Macan, the newly appointed principal of Brookside Elementary School in Binghamton, New York, invited teachers, parents, and community members to brainstorm answers to the question "What would we change if we could?"

Ms. Lisy-Macan's two immediate predecessors had stayed two years or less; she was the school's third principal in less than five years and the fifth principal that some of the staff had known there. The school was, in short, a picture of discontinuity.

The comments aired at the session included: "I don't get respect as a teacher the way I used to," and "Our kids don't have manners." As a result, she determined that several of the school community's needs and concerns would be best addressed by a comprehensive character education effort.

Getting Started

The following fall, Brookside began planning its character education program. The school formed a character education steering committee, which started crafting a program, beginning with a list of core character attributes. After soliciting teachers' input, the committee invited parents' suggestions. The result, says the principal, "was heartwarming." The parents' suggestions corroborated those of the teachers. The school community was, on this point at least, unified.

Brookside selected ten core character attributes; each would be highlighted for a month during the school year: Responsibility (September); Respect (October); Thankfulness (November); Kindness and Courtesy (December); Self-Control (January); Tolerance and Acceptance (February); Perseverance (March); Honesty (April); Friendship (May); and Cooperation (June).

Responding to Early Challenges

Brookside faced two early, interrelated challenges: involving all the teachers while respecting their professional expertise and autonomy; and increasing communication among teachers. Goal setting met both challenges. The group asked itself, "What do we want this program to look like? How will we get there?"

Explains Ms. Lisy-Macan, "If you can see you have an end goal, you can craft your effort toward it." As they shared ideas and feelings, the teachers realized they could all help each other toward their common goals.

Bringing Character to the Classroom

An important component of Brookside's character education effort is its school covenant, an agreement for behavioral expectations. This comprehensive document is an important link between the special character education activities and those classroom activities that are not defined as such.

Behavioral expectations are intimately associated with curricular ones. For example, the school makes natural connections between the character traits the students are studying and characters in literature and figures in social studies. "We help students to value personal effort and high standards," explains Ms. Lisy-Macan. "Our curriculum sets high expectations. Children are learning more. They are discovering that learning is fun and that they will become better persons in the future.

"We do see improvement in reading in grades 3-6," she adds. To make the connection between character education and academics, the school secured grant funding to give teachers time to plan. This allowed teachers the opportunity to look at curricula and develop units focusing on cooperative learning and ways to integrate the attributes.

The school also makes connections between health and character education. Teachers show how respect for the body can naturally lead to good decisions about smoking or drinking.

Even in extracurricular activities run by the PTA — dance, karate, etc. — there is a student behavior sign-off that refers to the monthly attributes. This way, the students know that, even if their teachers are not present, they are still accountable for their behavior.

Student responsibility for the school culture is a priority at Brookside. Students will correct each other or correct themselves, although the challenge remains great, especially for younger children. When kindergartners snatch blocks from one another, for example, a student or teacher will ask, "Are you showing respect?"

In fact, intrinsic motivation is a key to Brookside's philosophy. "We got caught up in recognition initially," explains Ms. Lisy-Macan. "We soon realized it was taking away from internal motivation. We do not do awards and rewards anymore. We help the students to be reflective. We encourage teachers to respond to what students write about and do; the reinforcement is personal."

Other Creative Activities

Other activities reinforce the character education work being done in the classroom:

- Monthly student-run assemblies that exemplify the current character attribute. These may include a story read by the principal, a skit, a cheer, or a pledge, depending on grade level. "Kids love the assemblies," says Ms. Lisy-Macan. "They also foster the connection with the home." One parent reports, "My kids are always talking about assemblies."
- The community newspaper's "Character Corner." As a result of the appearance of this regular feature, many local senior citizens have become supportive of the school's efforts, looking forward to reading about the character attribute of the month. The column also suggests family activities and related books.
- A Caring Calendar, prominently displayed. Steering committee members initially wrote daily reminders to the students about the monthly character attribute. Then the students themselves wrote the daily reminders. When the attribute was Thankfulness, for example, the students came up with 30 days' worth of suggestions on what they can do to live thankfully.
- A "Shut Off the TV Night," on which Brookside invites families to come to the school for PTA-planned games or crafts once a month. This activity enhances the connection between school and families. What's more, says Ms. Lisy-Macan, "the parent response is good. They tell us, 'I'm so glad you're doing this; it helps me to get to know my kids better.'"
- Meetings with students, teachers, and bus drivers to discuss what a safe and respectful bus ride is like. (Bus drivers have reportedly been in tears because they are so thankful for the support.)

Reflection and Results

Reflection on everyone's part is also integral to the Brookside experience. Ms. Lisy-Macan asks teachers to write about the best thing they've done related to character education each month — be it a moment or a planned activity. Teachers need time to reflect on curriculum and weave character lessons in naturally, she explains. Such reflection builds a sense of esteem and accomplishment.

There is definitely a change in the students since Brookside's focus on character education and relationship building has been in place. "Kids are more able to take the perspective of someone else," notes the principal. "That's important so they do not become so self-absorbed. They are coming to learn how their actions affect others as well as how they can help others."

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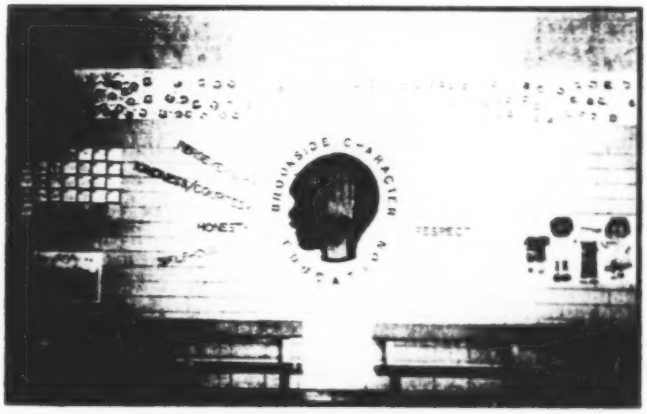

"We designed our head, hand, and heart logo as a tangible reminder that we are committed as a school to get beyond learning words; we want our children to internalize these character attributes."

Buck Lodge Middle School

urban • middle school (7-8) • enrollment: 900

Buck Lodge Middle School, in Prince George's County, Maryland, serves an ethnically and culturally diverse student population of nearly 900 students. Thirty-five languages are spoken among the students — a major challenge to all of the school's programs. The staff has responded with a community-building character education effort that is innovative and adaptable.

Buck Lodge Middle School, in Adelphi, Maryland, began its character education efforts in 1998, when problems associated with decreased respect for discipline became troublesome. The school community — administrators, teachers, and parents — formed a committee that implemented a values-based curriculum. Focusing on the school's diversity as both its challenge and its strength, the committee hoped to build a greater sense of belonging and mutual respect among the students.

After attending the first Character Education Conference sponsored by the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, the committee members formulated a master plan for character education at the school: Building Character One Brick at a Time.

Building Character, Building a Program

During the following school year, 1995-96, Buck Lodge initiated its Virtue of the Week program. A different virtue was presented each week to the students during their morning schoolwide television program. Virtues were defined on Mondays. Positive and negative experiences related to the virtue were discussed on Tuesdays. On Wednesdays, a guest from the community explained how the virtue was important to him or her, and how it could be applied to one's job or career. Historical role models who exemplified the virtue were discussed on Thursdays. As a culminating activity, on Fridays students presented projects that demonstrated their understanding of the virtue and its practical application in everyday life.

The Virtue of the Week program proved so successful that the school surveyed parents prior to the 1996-97 school year to find out which of the basic character values they would like to see taught to their children. From the results, Buck Lodge constructed its Character Counts Six Pillars: Responsibility, Caring, Citizenship, Respect, Fairness, and Trustworthiness.

During the same year, the Buck Lodge faculty incorporated into its character education initiative a biography-based curriculum, Wise Lives, whose program of famous individuals focuses on eight character themes. This new resource has proved especially effective as a complement to the Thursday component of the school's Virtue of the Week program.

Success Brings Expansion

As the character education effort has moved forward, new successes have brought innovations and additions. This year, for example, Buck Lodge joined the Community of Caring, further solidifying its character education efforts. This model holds that a school whose students, teachers, parents, and larger community work together will be — and, in fact, already is — successful.

Buck Lodge has also started the HOPE (Helping Other People Everywhere) Club, as a way of encouraging middle school students to begin meeting Maryland's 75-hour service learning requirement for high school graduation. "We wanted to make it easier for them, to give them an avenue," says Lorie Friedman, a health teacher. "And we were overwhelmed by the number of kids who wanted to participate." As a HOPE Club activity, students have made sandwiches for the homeless shelter, among many other good deeds.

Problem-Solving with Peer Mediation

To specifically address the problem of increasing disruptions in the learning environment, Buck Lodge introduced a peer mediation program. Students can ask a teacher to see the peer mediator if they are in some kind of trouble. Likewise, teachers can refer students to the mediator's office if they detect a problem. As a result of the program's implementation, the number of fights and disruptions at the school have been significantly reduced, reports peer mediation coordinator Barbara Klein.

Trust is a key component to the peer mediation program. The faculty respects the peer mediator's need to meet with students, and the students know that confidentiality is the rule. But the program goes beyond the simple settling of differences. Because the students themselves are trained to mediate, they are avoiding problems in the present while acquiring skills that will help them succeed in the future.

Paging Dr. Character...

A highly successful feature on the daily television program has been Dr. Character, a creation of Ms. Friedman, who dons a doctor's outfit and treats the problems of puppets who have difficulty with one or more of the character values. The show's simple premise is deceptive; it is, in reality, a thoughtful and compelling look at virtue. Dr. Character shows the students what the values are and what someone is like without them. The show's use of puppets is less threatening to the students than real case histories might be. It allows them to laugh at what they see in themselves — moodiness; anger; and sometimes the hard realities of lying, cheating, and stealing.

Over the course of several weeks, a variety of strategies is used to help the puppet patient make positive changes. Often, stories that have a moral emphasis are read. Every lesson contains follow-up activities, in which the students are asked to write about, role-play, and discuss the value they are studying. They are also encouraged to respond creatively with poems, stories, raps, songs, and sayings.

The doctor also interviews famous historical figures and gives messages about character from contemporary celebrities. One goal is to feature on the show a role model from each of the school's many ethnic groups. "We're interested in universal values and meeting the needs of all the children across the spectrum of ethnicity and abilities," says Ms. Friedman.

"When you deal with this much diversity," continues Ms. Friedman, who has 17 students in one class from 17 different countries, "you need a common language, and the language of universal values cuts across all cultures. It brings us together."

The students, meanwhile, are excited about the the program. They claim the puppets are "funky" and deal with real adolescent problems in real ways. Teachers and counselors, meanwhile, note that students mention the values they have heard about on the show, expressing an eagerness to improve their own character. "The Dr. Character feature means something to these students," stresses Ms. Friedman.

Ongoing Development

As students move through their classes during the day, teachers revisit, review, and reflect on the virtue of the week, building on the television show's presentation. Essential to the character education effort is its complete integration in the everyday academic curriculum. In science classes, for example, students draw parallels between the interactions among organisms necessary to maintaining a viable ecosystem and those of responsible people in a caring community. They also learn that people of good character care for their natural environment.

In English classes for speakers of other languages — one such class contains 16 students from 11 different countries who speak 10 different languages — teachers use simple English to review Dr. Character's most recent lesson, noting culturally based statements and idiomatic expressions and relating it to the immigrant experiences of the students. Of particular concern have been the problems of dealing with prejudice and the anger that arises as a response to it.

As these adaptations to meet the unique needs of a large and diverse student population attest, the faculty members at Buck Lodge understand that the character education program's continued success depends upon their ability to adapt, adopt, and innovate. Toward that end, a parent outreach program is currently being developed for next year, in the hope of further extending and strengthening the Buck Lodge community.

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Since Buck Lodge implemented its peer mediation program, there are fewer suspensions, attendance is up, and a more respectful feeling characterizes the school.

EASTERLING PRIMARY SCHOOL

rural • elementary Pre K-2 • student population: 850

Easterling Primary School promotes and develops good citizenship to battle the negative effects of the unsupportive environments that some children call home. The strategy is to develop children's confidence in their ability to improve their own lives. The effect has been a school that values children — and children who understand the value of character.

Six housing projects feed into Easterling Primary, a rural school serving 850 students, 70 percent of whom are minority, in prekindergarten through grade 2, in Marion, South Carolina. Says Principal Zandra Cook: "Our children associate with people every day who do not live by the codes we live by here. The greatest challenge we face is to ensure that our children learn to transfer skills and habits of character into environments that don't support them."

How does the school meet such a formidable challenge? Building students' confidence in their ability to make a difference is at the heart of Easterling's mission. "We tell our children," Ms. Cook explains, "'When you know what's right and do what's right, you can be a leader.'"

It is evident that the staff at Easterling cares deeply about each of its students. First on its list of stated beliefs is: "We have an obligation to make a positive difference in the lives of others."

A Committed and Involved Staff

Easterling began planning its character education program three years ago. To lead the process, a faculty character education team was established. Its members, says Ms. Cook, "take their jobs very seriously." The school's commitment to a strong character development program remains firmly at the center of its five-year strategic plan. The faculty continues to assess and refine their efforts; the strategic planning team meets monthly to plan activities and assess progress.

One of the faculty team's first tasks was to develop a solid foundation on which to base the character education initiative. They adopted the following:

- a compelling school motto ("I will treat others the way I want them to treat me");
- a common core of human values (Respect, Responsibility, Justice, Kindness, Honesty, Loyalty); and
- a list of schoolwide rules tied to the common core of human values ("I am honest. I cooperate. I show respect. I am responsible.")

Making Values Vital

The Easterling staff realized that for the program to be successful, it had not only to focus on the established common core of human values, but to make them a vital part of daily life at the school. Program implementation would therefore entail the adoption of specialized values-based curriculum, the integration of the core values into existing curriculum and programs, and the development by staff of a social skills curriculum.

To help accomplish its difficult mission, Easterling uses both the Heartwood curriculum, a literature-based program used to teach the common core values, and Second Step, a violence-prevention program that teaches children to empathize, control their anger, and solve problems. Integral to both of these curriculum models — and to the school's philosophy — is the development of life skills and lifelong guidelines for cooperation and achievement. Cooperative learning plays a big role in the school's plan. In each classroom, children can be seen working cooperatively to design job charts and assign responsibilities.

Manners and social skills are taught through Spanish and drama classes in which students use role play to learn how to voice an opinion in a kind way and listen attentively. Multicultural thematic units, assemblies, and luncheons provide opportunities for students to develop tolerance for others and appreciate diversity. Such programs do not just consist of costumes and food, however; they explore the history and culture of diverse ethnic groups in an engaging way.

In coordinating its many programs, Easterling's faculty seeks to ensure there is a unified set of expectations from class to class. "We try to integrate every component of the curriculum, to make sure that it's consistent," explains Principal Cook. "The children have to understand what is expected of them. This consistency is what makes us strong."

Reaching Out to Parents

Central to character education at Easterling is the belief that the family is the primary influence on young children.

Parents, therefore, are the most powerful role models. "We work very hard with our parents," acknowledges Ms. Cook. After the focus on character education and a common core of human values earned unanimous support from involved parents, the staff engaged parents and community using a strategic planning process.

Easterling provides a variety of workshops for parents on topics ranging from discipline to the content and methodology of the Heartwood and Second Step curricula. A parent resource center with books and tapes on child development is open to all families. In keeping with their priorities on early learning, prevention, and parental support, a parent-community group distributes about 30 hospital packets a month to the parents of newborns. Easterling's home-school liaison even makes house calls in the school's van, which was purchased with money from federal funds set aside for Goals 2000 initiatives.

Bringing Role Models to the Children

The school's daily television program is an effective tool for bringing good character models in the school to light. Each week, a second grader is selected from among his or her peers as Citizen of the Week and appointed to co-anchor the program for those five days. The program also helps the principal serve as a visible role model. On her "Monday Mailman" program, the principal reads and responds to questions she has received from students, parents, and teachers. Each Friday, the show promotes parents as character educators when fathers visit to read stories on the air. "The children love it," says Ms. Cook enthusiastically.

The school has also involved the business community. Business people visit daily to remind children that working together, caring for what you do, considering the needs of others, and working hard are essential to being a good employee.

A Caring School, Kids Who Understand

Easterling's school environment reflects the belief that "children are our highest priority." The staff is focused on creating a positive climate and respecting the dignity of each student. As a result, the classrooms are warm and inviting. The children's work is displayed on banners in the hallways at all times. A garden adorns the front of the school. The four-year-olds' cafeteria is lit up with colorfully painted nursery rhymes. The library also engages children's imagination with its depiction of a magic carpet and fairy tale scenes. It is, in short, a very different environment from the housing projects that some of the kids call home.

What are the results of this intensive program? The total discipline count is down 17.5 percent since last year. But more important, says Ms. Cook, "We see a difference in the children's understanding of what character is. They come to school without any skills at all. They don't know manners, how to express their feelings appropriately. No one talks to them much. What we see now is their ability to handle things, to work cooperatively, to come up with a product without arguing. They share in the effort and reap the benefits. We see growth, especially in children with emotional and behavioral problems. We have seen remarkable changes."

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"We try to integrate every component of the curriculum, to make sure that it's consistent," explains Principal Cook. "The children have to understand what is expected of them. This consistency is what makes us strong."

Hazelwood Elementary School

urban • elementary (Pre K-5) • enrollment: 608

Hazelwood School exemplifies total school change using the Developmental Studies Center (DSC) model. The staff made a commitment to the model — and the rigorous training it involved. As a result, this diversely populated school has a unified and focused approach to educating for character.

When Hazelwood School in Louisville, Kentucky, was selected as a candidate to be one of two pilot sites in the Developmental Studies Center's Child Development Project, it was asked, "What would your commitment to the program be?" Its answer, in deeds if not in words, was, "Total."

"We have a dedicated and committed staff," explains Brenda Logan, Hazelwood's principal. "This is probably why we were selected." In addition, she says, "all the different pieces of DSC's model meshed beautifully with both state mandates and our own philosophy." Now, she adds, "Everything we do is DSC philosophy. It has become a part of our culture."

In the summer of 1991, just prior to the program's first year of implementation, the staff participated in ten days of intensive — some would say grueling — training, only to continue training in developmental discipline upon returning to school that fall.

Ms. Logan credits the DSC program with helping Hazelwood, a school whose students often come from families living in economic need, primarily in two essential areas: it has assisted with discipline and with developing literacy, using literature-based reading and character-centered discussion.

"The Goal of Everything We Do"

Out of its DSC experience, Hazelwood developed three core values, which Ms. Logan characterizes as "the goal of everything we do." The values are Autonomy, which holds that intrinsic motivation is the key to good character; Belonging, in which students experience caring, respect, and trust; and Competence, or academic achievement and success.

Ms. Logan explains Autonomy this way: "We need to teach children to manage their own behavior — to build from within — so they can make good decisions." Of Belonging, she says, "We're more likely to be successful when we feel like we belong." The objective and the natural outcome of these two values is, of course, Competence, in the classroom and in life.

Translating Values to the Classroom

How do these core values translate to the classroom? Autonomy means self-discipline. According to the DSC model, when there is a community atmosphere in the classroom students are able to take responsibility and correct each other or correct themselves. Students tell new class members who are misbehaving, "We don't do that in this classroom."

If two kids are having a problem, says Ms. Logan, a teacher might say to the children, "Sit down and work it out." In general, there is a lot more dialogue between students. Naturally, every teacher has to take the degree of the problem into consideration, she admits. Serious infractions would warrant calling a parent. Overall, however, the students at Hazelwood are given opportunities to talk through their problems and make good choices.

Belonging means community building. Teachers use unity builders to start the day. During a daily class meeting, a teacher may ask, "How do we feel today?" — thus providing an opportunity for kids to get things off their chests and to get to know each other.

Students are also called upon to work cooperatively as partners. A teacher might say, "Choose a partner. Find a place in the room to work together." As a consequence of working within the DSC model, the children are not likely to resist this activity. Those who do are usually students who have been in the program only a short while.

Another community-building activity is the pairing of older and younger children. In these teacher-organized "buddy activities," older children read to younger ones, and tutor them in math and science as well. These activities give the older children responsibility and foster friendships across the grades.

Building a sense of community also involves extending learning outside the classroom walls. At each grade level teachers give students assignments to take home and complete with their families. One such assignment invites students to research the history of their name and discuss the story behind how they got it.

Reaching Families

Hazelwood also sponsors evenings that bring families together to participate in enjoyable, interactive activities. Instead of hosting the traditional science fair, in which children — or, all too often, parents — complete projects

in hopes of winning an award, Hazelwood hosts a Family Science Night, in which parents do a hands-on science activity with their child. On Family Read Night, parents and children read together in small groups, and on Family Arts and Crafts Night, parents and children work together on a craft.

The hope for these evenings is that they will provide a model of unity, an example of what children and their families can do together at home to support learning. For some Hazelwood students, these activity evenings constitute the most intensive time they spend with their parents all year.

The school does everything possible to empower and enable parents, many of whom live at or below the poverty level; Hazelwood connects them with outside agencies through its Parent Resource Center. The school has an infant and toddler room for parents who are getting a GED; over the past six years, 220 parents have benefited from these services.

Another program allows parents to come to a classroom to learn, for example, how to make soup. They go through the process, chopping vegetables, learning about health and hygiene issues, etc. Then the cafeteria staff makes the soup and serves it to the parents and students. "For some of these parents," Ms. Logan explains, "this is extremely valuable. There are parents who don't cook or who wouldn't let their child near the kitchen."

Discipline, Literacy, Community

Hazelwood has achieved Competence in many areas, from behavior to academics, from school restructuring to community building.

"People are amazed at how smoothly the school runs. They feel welcome. They see kids with smiles. Kids are engaged in their work." The children know how to control themselves — what is happening in the classroom is carrying over to the hallways and the cafeteria.

As a result of Hazelwood's supplementing its existing reading program with the DSC model, which uses engaging stories to bring students into moral discourse, reading skills and scores have increased tremendously. In literature-based lessons, teachers ask questions to show students the connections between their reading and their own experience. The strategy is effective and transferable — teachers now employ the same approach in social studies.

Looking back at the strides that Hazelwood has taken, Ms. Logan is also grateful to DSC for its intervention, staff development, and support. "The beauty of the partnership with the Developmental Studies Center," she explains, "is that it focuses on total systemic school change, it provides support to staff members, and it teaches teachers to support each other."

Ms. Logan reflects on the commitment it took to restructure the school and the positive results that ensued. "We looked at the whole school — we wanted to make sure it was inclusive," she says. "We adapted the whole philosophy of the school. Even Field Day was reconstructed. Instead of competing for awards, everyone now gets participation ribbons. For our kids, that's good. Everyone can feel like part of the community and everyone can feel like a winner."

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A typical bulletin board showing appreciation and care for others through partner/ collaborative work.

James E. McDade Classical School

urban • elementary (K-6) • enrollment: 194

The James E. McDade Classical school offers a highly structured program for students with high academic potential. It is a magnet school — its students are tested for selection. But underlying the school's pursuit of excellence in scholarship is an all-important theme: character-building. According to Principal Eleanor Addison, "Being smart doesn't necessarily mean being good. That's why we adopted character education."

Dr. Eleanor Addison has always been passionate about the character development of children and has seen it as essential to a good education. In fact, her school, McDade Classical, which serves a diverse, multi-ethnic student population from all over Chicago, was already practicing character education before the city's public school system developed its comprehensive character education focus and mandate. "We started character education at McDade not because of big problems," says Dr. Addison, the dynamic and inspiring principal in her ninth year at the elementary school. "It was rather an issue of trying to help people become more caring, cooperative, and respectful—including the adults."

The school began to formalize its approach to character education in 1990, when Dr. Cheryl Gholar of the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service, a parent of a McDade student and a leading proponent of character education, met with the school council to discuss the possibility of adopting a program. The idea quickly met with community approval and McDade soon emerged as an example of leadership and excellence in implementing character education. As one of Dr. Addison's colleagues remarked recently, "Now we're receiving acknowledgment for the soap box she's been on."

In 1997, as part of a citywide character education initiative, the Chicago public schools adopted 10 character traits on which schools are to base their programs: Caring, Courage, Courtesy, Fairness, Family Pride, Kindness and Helpfulness, Honesty and Truthfulness, Responsibility, Respect, and the Work Ethic.

To this list, McDade — tailoring its program to address the social, cultural, and academic needs of its students — has added Integrity and Generosity. The staff is quick to point out that adaptability and open minds are necessary features to a successful character education program — that is, that there is more than one right way to examine issues related to ethical principles and values. It is this depth of focus that, perhaps more than any other characteristic, makes the McDade program unique.

Authentic Teaching, Learning — and Success

McDade's level of reflection and commitment is evident in everything the school does. In a letter to parents, Dr. Addison writes, "As we prepare our students to take their places in society, they will also be prepared to face the challenges of life with an ethical compass for the journey. Our students will be able to respond to issues not only of right and wrong, but even complex issues that will require them to make decisions of right versus right. At McDade our concerns involve authentic teaching, authentic learning, and most of all, authentic success."

Each day at McDade, character education is translated into its current reality. To convey the attributes of character, the teachers do not use empty affirmations, memorization, or rote learning, but learning based in real life. "Students learn from the inside out," explains Dr. Addison. "It is simply the way we live, teach, and learn at McDade."

Examples of authentic teaching and learning include:

- **A rigorous academic program.** Every aspect of daily instruction in the core curriculum — including great books discussions, journal writing, debates, essays, library book selections, the Cooperative Learning Lab, the Math Lab, art, and music — emphasizes the teaching of values using McDade's 12 listed character traits.
- **Sportsmanship, conflict resolution, and teamwork training.** Selected literature and discussion on the participatory rights of all, as well as compassion and tolerance for the physically disabled, support gym class and playground activities.
- **"Morning Exercise."** This early morning, schoolwide consideration of an issue related to character helps to reinforce ethical behavior, while setting the tone for the day for students and staff.
- **Period-long motivational assemblies.** Speakers from the community address the students on topics related to the importance of excellence and character. And

attending the assemblies is itself good practice for students: "We expect students to show respect, propriety, and good manners," explains Dr. Addison.

- **Courses on male and female responsibility.** As a special feature, a Chicago Urban league representative came to the school once a week for a year to carry on a male responsibility program with fifth and sixth grade boys. Meanwhile, counselors and social workers conducted the "Girl Talk" program with fifth and sixth grade girls. In both cases, the emphasis was on excellence of scholarship and character. A modified program for third and fourth graders is now being conducted.
- **"Student of the Month."** One child from each homeroom is selected each month by his or her peers for best exemplifying the McDade traits of good character.
- **Community service.** Students regularly run food and coat drives and they have visited nursing homes bearing gifts and entertaining residents.

The cardinal rule at McDade is that character education must always be integral to the whole program. "It is as important as anything we do," says Dr. Addison. The McDade program consists of "the three R's plus Respect and Responsibility. Without the fourth and fifth R's , there is nothing we can do with the first three," she adds.

A Unified Effort

Because the McDade staff is relatively small, everyone is a member of the character education team. There is no separate committee. Parents are also a tremendous part of the school's success, joining in the teamwork that makes for a tight-knit community. "We encourage parents to be partners in reinforcing the values being taught," says Dr. Addison. "They know how important it is for them to exemplify the values we stress." Parents know they are welcome in the school, so they also serve as chaperones, volunteers, aides, and sponsors.

A diligent assessment process is another key to the McDade's excellence. Report cards pay special attention to work and study habits so that students develop a work ethic, commit to excellence, and examine and explore the benefits and consequences of their actions and choices. Surveys also help monitor the school's progress. Here too, parents' input — as well as that of staff and students — is solicited and utilized, fostering an atmosphere of mutual support. As the parents of one McDade student wrote, "The character education program supports the efforts of parents to raise their children to become responsible, caring adults. It is very important for children to understand that the morals and values being taught should be used in any environment or situation."

As a result of this unified effort, Dr. Addison says, "McDade is the most wonderful place anyone could be... you can feel the goodness that permeates its life. It's not about one person. It's about all of us coming together to make children number one." And everything being done at McDade, insists Dr. Addison, can be done in other public schools.

Naturally enough, motivation at very high at McDade among both students and the staff. Student attendance is at 98 percent. "I am as excited about character education now as I was my first year. In fact, more so because of the tremendous teamwork and cooperation now that the program is fully in place," Dr. Addison says.

Certainly McDade has enjoyed the recognition and honors of a truly excellent school. Its students go on to the finest middle and high schools in the city. But the school's character education program also helps the staff to keep the students' — and the school's — success in perspective. Principal Addison frequently reminds all who will listen, "It is in one's treatment of others where ultimate success comes."

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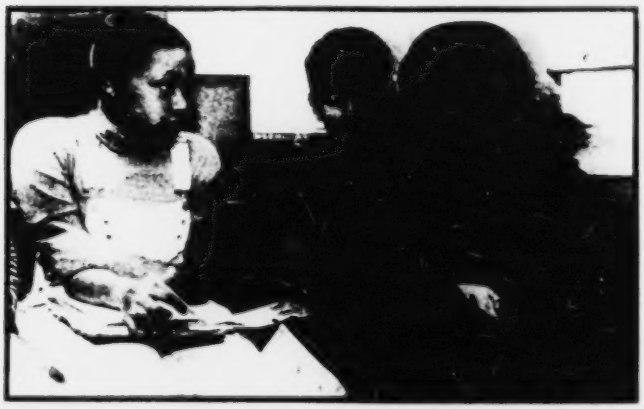

McDade Students brainstorm about core values that are meaningful to their lives.

Mound Fort Middle School

urban • middle (6-8) • enrollment: 634

Mound Fort Middle School began its character education program with two goals: to provide a safer environment for learning, and to improve student reading. In the classroom, the entire staff teaches and models the Community of Caring's five core values: Family, Respect, Responsibility, Trust, and Caring. But community service projects are the solidifying agent in positive character development.

Quilt-making has become a passion at Mound Fort Middle School, an urban school for grades 6–8 in Ogden, Utah. Students there can be found tying quilts before and after school hours. When students finish a class assignment, they can go to the back of the classroom and tie quilts. It is a school community effort. Last year alone, the students at Mound Fort — everyone from those having the most difficult time to the most advanced—learned to make quilts. As a result, the school presented nearly 30 quilts to a local homeless shelter.

Helping middle school students touch the lives of others is one of the striking features of the character education initiative at Mound Fort, where students are taught to see beyond their own gratification. "Often students come to school with a 'What's in it for me?' attitude," explains Principal Tim Smith. But, he says, in giving of themselves, students "discover a joy they never knew before."

Identifying the Problem

Mound Fort began its character education initiative four years ago with two goals: to break the cycle of violence, and to improve student reading. The faculty realized the two problems were related. "We realized that some of our students were illiterate," Smith recalls, and that they often come from "angry and hostile environments. We have students who have no idea what a family is."

The next step was to train a core group of teachers and administrators using the Community of Caring model with its five core values: Family, Respect, Responsibility, Trust, and Caring. The core group of teachers in turn shared their training experience with the rest of the faculty.

A steering committee of teachers, parents, and students was then established and charged with carefully considering the Community of Caring design and presenting it to the wider community. After the design received the community's unanimous support, Mound Fort adopted and infused the five core values into the overall school program.

Service—In and Out of the Classroom

In the classroom, teachers stress self-management and social skills as part of the daily routine. A classroom visitor sees students helping each other and using kind words. As part of the character education program, the entire student body has pledged to give up put-downs, to right wrongs, to seek advice from wise people of all ages, and to praise people every day. At Mound Fort, the value of each individual is emphasized.

Prepared classroom lessons deal with reading skills, character education, and social skills; outside community service projects apply classroom learning and bring the whole process of character education into focus. Tim Smith challenged the faculty and students by putting it this way: "If we have adopted these core values, let's prove it by supporting families, caring for others, and accepting responsibility."

In addition to quilt-making, the five core values are practiced in service activities such as assisting in local nursing homes, helping local prison inmates (several of the students have parents in prison), and reading to younger students in a neighboring elementary school. Teachers provide the skills training and supervision the students need to carry out these and other service activities effectively.

Meeting the Ongoing Challenge

The school sustains its efforts through weekly in-service teacher training. Monthly steering committee meetings and ongoing assessment at faculty meetings keep the program fresh and focused.

What are the greatest challenges to character education at Mound Fort? "Time to take care of the paperwork so I can spend more time with my kids and parents in a caring and constructive way," Smith answers unhesitatingly. "It is a constant battle to spend enough time with parents."

Parents are an important part of the equation. Says Smith: "Parents need to know that they are going to be helped, not just told what their children are doing wrong." A lot of telephone calls now go home to parents about the

positive efforts and achievements of their children. Most important, perhaps, is that parents are coming to the school more frequently to see good things happening.

A Remarkable Reversal

What exactly are the results of this innovative effort? "The reversal has been remarkable," explains Smith. "Violence has almost disappeared. The students themselves are stopping the violence."

"Four years ago, one or two fights broke out on a typical school day," Smith recalls. "Now, we see maybe one or two a month." He cites one student in particular: "In sixth grade, she was always instigating fights. Now, as an eighth grader, she has learned that there is an alternative to violence."

The dramatic change brought about by character education is not limited to a reduction in violence or teenage gang members who have learned to quilt. Negative behavior overall has plummeted. Shoplifting has decreased significantly at the local supermarket since Mound Fort students started volunteering—bagging, returning carts, and helping customers. Outside agencies have mentioned fewer referrals, fewer calls to the school, and fewer court actions.

Most important, students are connecting to their community. Those who make quilts look forward to presenting their finished projects at the shelter. "It's basic to human nature that self-esteem rises when we connect with others in a meaningful way," explains Assistant Principal Lou Anderson.

Evidence of character education's profound effect is that students' altruism goes beyond recipients designated as "needy"; indeed, it has found its way into the everyday life of the school community. As an example, a school counselor reports that when she had tennis elbow, "there wasn't a day that a kid didn't offer to help carry my bags."

"Scores Have Skyrocketed"

Mound Fort is proof that values and academics are integral to one another. One parent notes with astonishment that instead of watching television, her son has taken up reading to his younger sister. Indeed, Smith credits this new enthusiasm for literacy to the students' use of reading as a method of service—particularly to the elderly and younger children. "Scores have skyrocketed," says Smith "because students see the point of their hard work."

Mound Fort's eighth grade Standford Achievement Test scores have almost doubled in the last four years. In an even more dramatic development, reading scores of 90 percent of all sixth graders improved by at least one whole grade level during the past school year. As a result, numerous advanced courses in a variety of subjects have been added to the curriculum.

Lifelong Character Development

When asked about Mound Fort's goals for character education, Smith replies, "We want to continue promoting these same core values. We want to keep going and to help others." His hope is that a board will be established to support character education throughout the district. In fact, the new district superintendent has recently decided to require character education and is pointing to Mound Fort as a model.

"Our goal is that our students will be better tomorrow that they are today," continues Smith. "And they can't keep improving unless they have values to put into practice. The kids are learning values that will help them be successful and will enable them to teach these very same values to their own children."

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Serving the elderly as part of community service by reading at rest homes and care centers.

Mountain Pointe High School

suburban • high school (9-12) • student population: 2,673

At Mountain Pointe High School in Phoenix, Arizona, character education emphasizes self-management skills. The school's motto — Purpose, Pride, and Performance — pervades the culture of the school community, including its extensive outreach effort. Innovative curriculum and rigorous assessment are essential to the school's commitment to academic excellence, community service, and character development.

Even before Mountain Pointe High School opened its doors for its first school year in 1991, Principal Harold Slemmer seized the opportunity to work closely with his faculty and staff. To focus on creating a distinctive school culture, they held a retreat. The intensive sessions, recalls Slemmer, centered on this question: "What type of character do we want our students to exemplify as a result of their experience here?"

Purpose, Pride, and Performance

After three days of discussion, the participants established a motto that has served the school well: Purpose, Pride, and Performance. "This motto," Slemmer insists, "has been well ingrained in the fabric of the school culture."

To a visitor at Mountain Pointe, it is apparent that the motto has been integrated into all aspects of school life. It is a key component of the school's extensive outreach effort, figuring prominently in the school's newsletter, its student and faculty handbooks, and its list of expectations for students and teachers. Slemmer personally gives his "Triple-P" speech to eighth graders who will be attending Mountain Pointe — and to their parents.

In keeping with its Three-P approach, the school is diligent about assessment. Every year students fill out comprehensive surveys, giving feedback on time spent doing homework, watching television, attending classes, and participating in school activities. In this way, students' individual time management skills — an academic goal at Mountain Pointe — can be monitored and improved.

Bringing the Three Ps to Life

How are the Three Ps brought to life? In every classroom, teachers and students focus on the "purpose of pursuing a quality education with a lot of integrity," says Slemmer. The faculty is "relentless" about helping students "get at what quality means — not just the end result but in the effort as well." Here are some examples of classroom activities designed to build character:

- In Sandy Juniper's American Studies class, students read Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. In a series of responsive writings, they draw conclusions about such issues as right and wrong versus legal and illegal; a person's responsibility to self versus community; and the effects of fear, hysteria, and prejudice. Using cooperative learning, they then relate Miller's play to readings describing the Holocaust and McCarthyism.
- In a class on United States and Arizona government, teacher K.R. Scott seeks to develop students into "thoughtful, active, and responsible learners and members of society." To meet this objective, they engage in a series of projects that require them to:
  - — contact government agencies and officials to gather information;
  - — work with peers to develop papers and presentations based on research;
  - — develop a position, based on research and analysis of information, on a political issue; and
  - — establish, as responsible adults, a working relationship with their government and, by extension, society.
- In Beyond the Limit, a course developed by counselor Gwyn Schneck, teacher Kathy Brown illustrates how life skills develop and reinforce character. In a lesson on goal-setting, students list the positive feelings that come from keeping promises and setting and achieving goals. They then discuss other, less immediately recognizable, results: "Strength of character, inner integrity, awareness of self-control, and the courage and strength to accept more of the responsibility for our own lives." Students then describe in writing how their own lives would be improved if their honor were greater than their moods — that is, if their character were stronger than their personal feelings.
- In Evan Anderson's writing class, students write reflective essays on the subject of character. Suggested approaches include the following questions:
  - — Is character important (especially for public figures) or are performance and skills all that matter?

— Focus on one person's character that you greatly admire. Reflect on the person, his or her character, and how it affects you.
— Have we, as a society, lost sight of the qualities that constitute character?
— Is character defined by universal qualities or does it depend on cultural setting, individual viewpoints, etc.?
— Reflect on a definitive moment in your life when your character was shaped or strengthened. How did it happen? What has been the effect or result?

Leadership, Service, Gratitude

Has this character education initiative been effective? The school's emphasis on the Three Ps has enabled it to be a semifinalist in the A+ School of Excellence Program for three years. In 1996, Redbook featured Mountain Pointe as one of the top 50 schools in the country. Recognition and awards, from academics to athletics, have been extensive.

In addition, Mountain Pointe's leadership in character education has extended beyond the school's walls. Two years ago, the staff helped the Tempe Union school district to develop its 10 core values — Honesty, Responsibility, Compassion, Respect, Integrity, Desire to Learn, Trust, Cooperation, Citizenship, and Service to Others. Mountain Pointe teachers contributed a number of the model lessons to the district's publication, Core Values in the Classroom. With the district's commitment and support, Mountain Pointe's efforts in character education will influence over 12,000 students in the Phoenix area.

Perhaps a more important indicator of the school's success, however, is the pervasive service ethic at the school. A canned food drive in conjunction with the Phoenix Police has become a major activity of the student council. During the December holidays, students run the "Angel Tree Program," which provides gifts for children whose parents are in prison. A number of clubs at the school have adopted streets to keep them free of litter. In fact, fully half of Mountain Pointe's clubs are service-oriented.

Further — and eloquent — testimony to the school's achievement comes from the students themselves. In a letter to the Mountain Pointe staff, Nicole Schultz, Class of 1996, writes:

There are three things in my life I live by...: Purpose, Pride, and Performance. Purpose — *The word that each day reminds me of why I am here and what I have to accomplish.* Pride — *What makes me stand tall each time I hear my name.* Performance — *The actions I take to move forward in my life.*

....You have been there for me and have become more of a family than just a staff. And that's why I thank you for all your love, consideration, and pushes to look toward the future. Once again, thank you for helping me to become "me."

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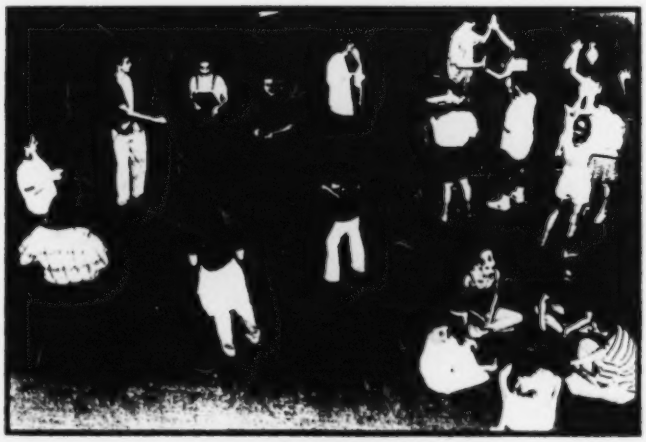
www.tuhsd.k12.az.us/Mountain_Pointe_hs/index.html
Dr. James Buchanan, Superintendent



Pride Reaching Out (P.R.O.) peer helpers, sponsored by the school counselors, assist their peers in conflict resolution, team-building techniques, win/win solutions, career planning, and high school success strategies.

Newsome Park Elementary School

urban • elementary (K-5) • enrollment: 758

Newsome Park Elementary in Newport News, Virginia, had once been the site of a court-ordered busing program. Then the members of the school community decided to remake Newsome Park into a magnet school with two programs: traditional and science/math/technology. Now its academic reputation attracts three times the number of applicants it can hold. But the key to the school's turnaround has been its integration of character education and community service into a rigorous curriculum.

Newsome Park Elementary School's distinctive stationery is intriguing: printed over a drawing of a baby's fingers grasping the forefinger of a wrinkled hand are the words "Joining Old and Young." What, one asks, does this image have to do with a magnet elementary school that specializes in science, math, and technology? The answer is community. The stationery design represents Newsome Park's effort to break down the barriers between the school and the larger community.

Located in a predominantly black neighborhood in Newport News, Virginia, Newsome Park Elementary had been the site of court-ordered busing since the 1970s. Then the school community made the decision to become a magnet school — to integrate by choice instead of force. In preparation for its radical transformation, the staff informally surveyed parents, community members, the NAACP, religious leaders, and teachers for input. The survey results determined that the school's new focus would be on character education.

The school, a model of academic excellence, is now thoroughly racially integrated, with a waiting list of nearly 1,300 prospective students.

Practicing Citizenship

One of Newsome Park's first steps was a complete revamping of the curriculum. "We want students to internalize good character traits," says Principal Peter Bender. "Our focus, therefore, is practice — giving children extended opportunities to practice compassion and responsibility. We try to show the children real-life situations in which people have exhibited positive character traits."

Accordingly, Newsome Park has made community service a key component to the character curriculum. But, unlike many school programs that emphasize community service, Newsome Park's program goes beyond isolated service projects. Instead, the school sees community service as a process of becoming a good citizen. Through repeated community service experiences, students learn to:

- become informed about community issues;
- care about issues;
- take action; and
- apply the character traits of responsibility, courage, kindness, and respect.

Comprehensive Service Learning

To instill these values into its students, Newsome Park implemented a service learning program that involves every student — not just one class or service club — and that integrates community service into every segment of the curriculum. "We want the connection between service and learning," explains Bender, "to be a natural one."

Each Newsome Park student stays with the same teacher for a two-year "loop." In the K-1 loop, students work with senior citizens. (Hence the school stationery design.) In grades 2-3, the children work with the Department of Social Services on an Adopt-a-Family program, providing clothing, school supplies, and encouragement to families in need. Grade 4 and 5 students "adopt" a ward of the nearby VA hospital. "Just watching the children in the quadriplegic ward at the VA hospital, you can see they are learning kindness and courage," adds Bender.

In these loops, the children forge real relationships with their "charges." But the challenge to curriculum developers is creating compelling, appropriate, and academically sound lessons that incorporate these relationships — as well as the ideals of service and character building.

When, for instance, kindergartners and first graders study the theme "Living Things," they and their senior partners travel to a nursery and work together to build a greenhouse. As another example, the following community service activities are suggested for a schoolwide basic theme entitled, "How Things Work":

- In the K-1 loop, the students learn from their senior partners about technological changes over the years

and the seniors visit the school's computer and science labs to learn about current technology.
- Students in the 2-3 loop write and mail friendship letters while investigating how the postal system works; they also collect toys that involve simple machines to donate to their adopted families.
- Fourth- and fifth-grade students at the VA Hospital study the machines and technology used to help patients.

The Support System: Parents

The Newsome Park staff was quick to realize that curriculum is only as strong as the support it receives from parents and the community. "We discuss the monthly character trait in our newsletter to help parents make connections," explains Bender. The only way that young children can understand these concepts, he says, is by the regular and meaningful reinforcement they receive at home.

But, Bender continues, "We don't intend to take the place of parents. They are, in fact, our support system." To strengthen ties with parents and the larger community, the school invites parents to the monthly Kiwanis Club "Terrific Kids" assembly, where children are recognized for setting and working diligently on specific, realistic goals — such as improving certain parts of their academic performance or behavior.

The Behavior Code Contract

In addition, all Newsome Park parents sign a "Parent, Student, Teacher Contract," which outlines the responsibilities of each of these three segments of the school community. The contract is one of the cornerstones of the character education program at Newsome Park.

The parents' portion of the contract asks them to provide a home environment that will encourage and stimulate learning by discussing schoolwork with children; modeling the importance of learning; and fostering a positive respect for school, curriculum, teachers, and staff.

In their portion, the students agree to take responsibility for fulfilling all class work and homework assignments; attend school regularly and promptly; follow rules and regulations, including the dress code; and demonstrate respect for authority, property, and the rights of others.

Teachers affirm their commitment to emphasizing basic academic skills, community service learning, and character education; providing a positive, safe, and orderly environment; regularly notifying parents of students' academic progress and conduct; and using technology to enhance instruction.

In essence, the contract is a community-building activity, defining the roles and responsibilities of all of the school community's members. It plays a major part in Newsome Park's effort to break down the barriers — in communication, in understanding — that interfere with the unity that a school needs to attain academic excellence.

It also confirms the commitment of everyone involved to the principles entailed by character education, including effective and involved citizenship. By enlisting students — along with parents and teachers — as committed citizens of the school, Newsome Park provides them with the extended opportunity — the practice that Principal Bender emphasizes — they need to become caring, involved members of the larger community.

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Dr. Wayne D. Lett, Superintendent

"We want students to internalize good character traits," says Bender. "Therefore, our focus is practice — giving children extended opportunities to practice compassion and responsibility."

PATTONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

suburban • high school (9-12) • enrollment: 2,150

In the greater St. Louis, Missouri, area, character education goes by the name PREP — Personal Responsibility Education Process — a school, business, and community partnership. At Pattonville High School in Maryland Heights, the whole community makes its best effort to give kids what they need to succeed.

The Pattonville program got started when retired district superintendent Dr. Roger Cloug convened a task force made up of teachers, parents, business leaders, clergy, and government officials to put together a list of character traits, values, and skills they wanted their children to know and act upon. The task force produced a list of 20, which includes: Commitment, Compassion, Cooperation, Courage, Initiative, Patience, Reliability, Respect, Responsibility, Self-Control, Service, and Time Management.

Because the whole community was involved in the decision-making process, the initiative received an overwhelmingly positive reaction. Initial funding came from matching grants from corporations. "What we're trying to do is simply help the kids gain those traits society has deemed important for success," explains Leonard Sullivan, PREP's district co-chair, who chairs Pattonville's Social Studies department. "We want to be able to get along; we have a diverse population and we need to learn to cooperate."

MAKING THE COMMITMENT

Plans for the PREP character education effort included two goals: to improve academic achievement — setting higher expectations among its students — and to create responsible students. Before the school could begin to meet those goals, however, the Pattonville staff had to commit itself. Some teachers were hesitant at first, saying, "We can't give up our time, we have so many requirements to meet." As it became evident, however, that character education would actually make academics easier by improving classroom and school climate, faculty became supporters.

Over the last five years, Pattonville has tried to make character education an everyday part of students' lives. The faculty has focused its efforts on infusing character education throughout the school's curriculum and culture. "We have turned character education into something subtle and natural, so that it flows from the teachers' strategies and examples," says Sullivan.

Now Pattonville's level of staff reflection is one of the school's most impressive features. On Thursdays, for example, students leave early to give teachers an hour for staff development. Often there is a department presentation; once a month, a workshop day. Some teachers work on classroom discipline, for example, others on computers.

The best attended workshop, however, is a character education reading group, which as many as one-third of the staff attends. Sullivan explains: "Last year, we went through William Bennett's *Book of Virtues* chapter by chapter. This year it's his book *The Moral Compass*. When reading 'Hearth and Home,' (a chapter from the latter book) we talked about the role of family with kids from broken homes — and how we can help more.

"What happens is that teachers say, 'I was able to use this story with this student, or I helped that student,'" continues Sullivan. "One uses Aristotle's essay on Friendship. A Social Studies teacher has students imagine having been a soldier who has taken part in the D-Day invasion at Normandy, then write a letter describing the experience, while demonstrating how those soldiers relied upon and exemplified the PREP values, traits, and skills.

"That's how we want character education used at Pattonville," Sullivan explains. "If we tried to just add it onto the curriculum, there would just be a negative response." Integrating character education into course work makes it natural and memorable for the students.

BUILDING A CHARACTER RESOURCE BASE

Just as important as creativity in using the PREP values, traits, and skills in classroom activities are flexibility and adaptability. Character education is a living process. As the school's PREP initiative evolves, the Pattonville team annually reviews its list of core character traits to see if they still meet student and community needs, and makes the necessary adjustments as needed. "For example," says Sullivan, "our students are busy with homework, sports, and jobs; they need to work on time management skills. So far the community hasn't stressed time management.

although it is on our list." The staff plans to re-evaluate how well the current list meets student needs.

Over the years, the district has created an enormous amount of resource materials for character education. Before the end of every school term, PREP obtains funding for a summer workshop. Representatives from each of the district's schools gather to reflect on the past year, do a self-exam to see where they need to go, and create materials, such as monthly lesson plans, for each grade level.

Pattonville has established a set of supplemental lesson ideas; teachers are encouraged to keep them handy. "We would hope that even if the teachers were just to read them," says Sullivan, "they would have some effect." In addition, every teacher is given generic lesson plans and a resource of famous or notable quotes about each of the 20 PREP values, traits, and skills.

Going Beyond the Classroom

An important factor in the school's complete integration of the PREP list into students' lives has been the establishment of activities with practical and community service value.

A major source of pride for the school is its entirely student-run credit union, a full-service branch of the Educational Employees' Credit Union. The activity, explains Sullivan, encourages students to be financially responsible. "These students are extremely active in PREP—in the ethics of being a bank employee: collaboration, confidentiality, honesty." The credit union, which met with skepticism at first, has been in service for four years now.

Another successful activity has been STARS (Students Taking Action Reaching Students). In this cooperative program, about 20 high school students counsel at-risk elementary and middle school students after school, creating a supportive partnership. The student-to-student relationship reflects the philosophy of the PREP curriculum and is based on service learning.

Since Pattonville has a 50-hour community service credit requirement for graduation, all students participate in a variety of community-building activities. The district shows its support by committing funding and resources to pay for a full-time community service coordinator, as well as transportation for 9th graders to do one full school day of service. Projects have included working in gardens, hospitals, homeless shelters, and humane societies. One group applied for a community service grant, and earned enough money to build playgrounds for several homeless shelters. Students who have made outstanding contributions — one gave over 800 hours — are honored at graduation.

The Basics Tell the Story

Asked what makes Pattonville one of the top schools in the state, Leonard Sullivan points to the basics, which demonstrate the school's values, philosophy, and commitment. "It's safe," he says. "It's clean. Vandalism is minimal to none. And there is tremendous opportunity to achieve — it's a place where the staff is committed to the profession of teaching. The kids realize that this is a place of learning. And they must like it; attendance is excellent, at about 95 percent."

Commitment and reflection, Sullivan notes, are really the keys to the Pattonville program's success. "The staff displays the traits we want our students to practice."

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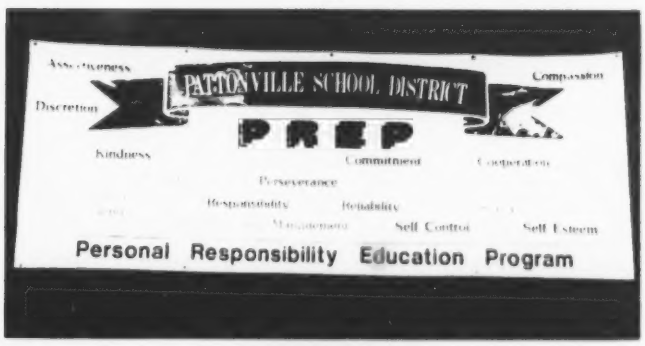


This banner contains the twenty character traits emphasized by the Pattonville School District. Ten words are highlighted during a school year. A two-year cycle is used to avoid duplication.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Albert Parlin Junior High School
Everett, Massachusetts

Allen Classical/Traditional Academy (Elementary)
Dayton, Ohio

C.A. Farley School
Hudson, Massachusetts

Gatzert Elementary School
Seattle, Washington

Limerick Elementary School
Canoga Park, California

Los Coyotes Elementary School
La Palma, California

Naples Park Elementary School
Naples, Florida

Nolan M. Bruce Elementary School
Maplewood, Missouri

PHOTOGRAPHS

Inside back cover, by columns from left to right, photographs from top to bottom:

Column 1

Community Service Bulletin Board, **Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter School**

Caring Calendar, **Brookside Elementary School**

Dr. Character, Nurse Elaine and Puppet Millie, **Buck Lodge Middle School**

Column 2

Team Planning for Character Education, **Easterling Primary School**

Every student has an older buddy, **Hazelwood Elementary School**

Students, **James E. McDade Classical School**

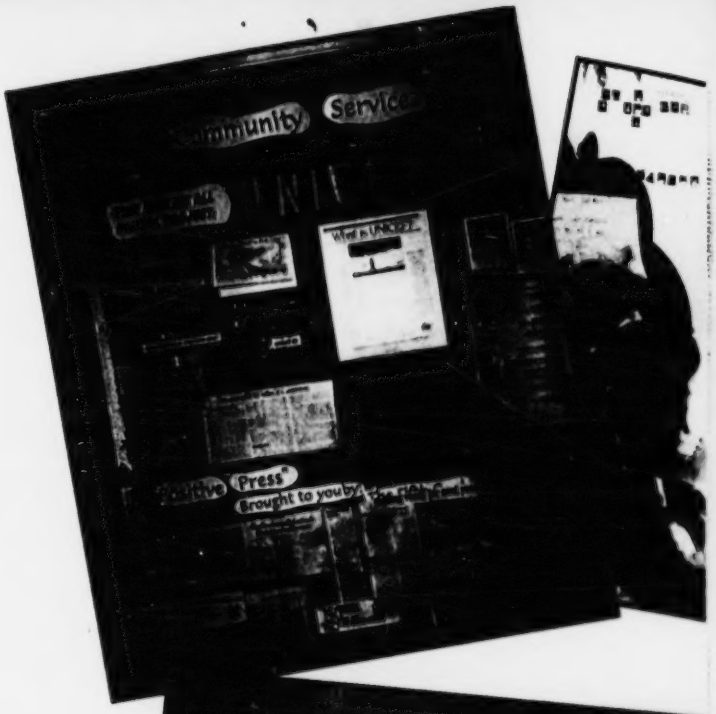
Column 3

Caring for other's progress, **Mound Fort Middle School**

Business Teacher, **Mountain Pointe High School**

Character Education produces community service, **Newsome Park Elementary School**

Pattonville's commitment to Community Service, **Pattonville High School**



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The text of this booklet is also available on businessweek.com in the marketing forum area, which is accessible from the home page.